

Message Text

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64

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-11

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R 180401 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3229

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 3096

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, ETRN, IN

SUBJ: CIVAIR MINISTER KARAN SINGH RESIGNS

1. MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION KARAN SINGH SURPRISED PARLIAMENT MARCH 16 MY READING OUT PARTS OF LETTER OF REISGNATION HE HAD SENT TO PRIMIN GANDHI PREVIOUS NIGHT. IN LETTER, HE ACCEPTED " MORAL RESPONSIBILITY" FOR MARCH 15 CRASH OF INDIAN AIRLINES HS-748 (AVRO) TRAINER NEAR SECUNDERABAD, ANDHRA PRADESH, IN WHICH CREW OF THREE AND BOY ON GROUND DIED. MPS FROM ALL PARTIES PRAISED KARAN SINGH FOR ALL- BUT- UNPRECEDENTED GESTURE, URGED PRIMIN NOT RPT NOT ACCEPT RESIGNATION, BUT VOICED DOUBTS ABOUT AVRO AIRWORTHINESS, WHICH KARAN SINGH HAD DEFENDED IN PAST. MAJOR ENGLISH DAILIES' EDITORIAL REACTION SIMILAR. PRIMIN HAS NOT YET ACCEPTED RESIGNATION.

2. AIRWORTHINESS OF INDIAN- MADE AVRO (HAWKER- SIDDELEY DESIGN) HAS LONG BEEN SUBJECT OF CONTROVERSY, DESPITE CLEAN CHITS AFTER SEVERAL INVESTIGATIONS. AAVRO HAS CAUSED INDIAN AIRLINES PILOTS TO STRIKE IN PAST, AND THEY STILL WARY. CIVAIR MINISTRY SOURCES ANNOUNCED MARCH 17 THAT INQUIRY INTO CRASH UNDERWAY BUT MEANWHILE INDIAN AIRLINES' 16 AVROS WOULD CONTINUE TO FLY.

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3. COMMENT: KARAN SINGH, SON OF LAST RASHMIR RAJA, IS WIDELY REGARDED AS INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL LIGHTWEIGHT WHO KEPT IN CABINET BECAUSE OF LOYALTY TO PRIMIN AND AS SOP TO PRINCES AND KASHMIRI HINDUS. HE WAS STRONGLY CRITICIZED IN PARLIAMENT EARLIER THIS MONTH FOR SECURITY LAPSES AND MALADROIT HANDLING OF WILDCAT STRIKE AFTER THREE PORTUGUESE GOAN STOWAWAYS FLEW TO LONDON ON AIR INDIA.

MOYNIHAN

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*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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